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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: Estonia Shares E-Governance with World

¶1. Summary: Estonia certainly is an e-state. It has been one of the world's leading users of information and communication technology (IT) in the fields of government, banking and social responsibility (such as e-tax filing and voting on the internet). According to the World Economic Forum, Estonia ranks 18th worldwide, and leads in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Networked Readiness Index. Estonia is now making this expertise a cornerstone of its foreign assistance. The GOE, with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Open Society Institute, established in 2002 a regional e-Governance center -- the e-Governance Academy (EGA). The EGA is a non-governmental organization that trains politicians, specialists and representatives of the third sector to increase government efficiency and improve democratic processes through building open information societies. The EGA focuses its work on the former Soviet republics, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia. The GOE is interested in partnering with the United States to e-development projects. End summary.

e-Governance Academy

¶2. The EGA is a non-profit organization that runs projects commissioned by Estonian and international donors. The EGA shares Estonia's extensive e-governance experience with other countries, but has also become something of an IT clearinghouse, by collecting e-governance experiences from around the world. National wealth is not an issue: EGA points out that Estonia has built strong e-governance despite a per capita GDP that is only one-third the EU average. EGA has four major areas of operations: local e-governance, e-democracy, central e-governance, and IT-based education. EGA's mission is to train and advise governments and civil societies in the use of technology to promote government efficiency, enhance civil society, and improve democratic processes.

¶3. The academy has run projects in both the developing and developed world, in countries ranging from Afghanistan, Armenia, and Iraq, to Great Britain and Japan. In all, EGA has operated in 25 countries and provided training to over 500 people. This year the MFA is funding a project in the West Bank to implement e-governance and e-services for Palestinians. A team of Estonian experts visited the West Bank in July, and 20 Palestinians came to Estonia for a week's training at EGA in September. Other projects in 2009 included a training program for African officials in Switzerland on the provision of e-services and cyber security, assisting the Macedonia Land Board, sharing best practices with Albania and Montenegro, e-governance training in Iraq, and assisting with building an e-training facility in Crimea. EGA will

also shortly provide training on information systems to the Afghan parliament. EGA programs are funded by a variety of sources, including the GOE, UNDP, Soros Foundation, European Commission, World Bank, and foreign governments and institutions.

¶4. In addition to training and consulting activities, the EGA has been active in promoting the use of free and open software, particularly in the public sector, and is developing methodologies and guidelines for the reduction of corruption using IT. EGA is also active in promoting data security and privacy protection.

Seeking USG Partnership

¶5. Estonia is an active participant in global development assistance. It has been successful in rebuilding a democratic state and society at home, and now is sharing its reform experiences and practical knowledge with partner countries. Estonia's priority development assistance partners are Afghanistan,

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Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Sharing its own e-governance experience, through EGA projects, has been a major aspect of Estonian assistance. Besides bilateral co-operation, Estonia seeks opportunities for trilateral cooperation with other donor countries to leverage its assistance resources. MFA contacts have indicated a strong interest in collaborating with the United States. Trilateral projects have already taken place in co-operation with Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Canada and the United Kingdom (supporting Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia). The EGA plays an important role not only in implementing development assistance projects, but also plays an important role in drafting Estonia's development assistance policy.

¶6. Comment: The USG and Estonia share an interest in promoting transparent, democratic governance and strong civil societies, and are focused on many of the same priority countries. Estonia lacks resources, but can bring to the table strong first-hand reform experience and the credibility that comes from having successfully undertaken reform. Its experience in e-governing is moreover considerable, and the EGA already has a track record in many parts of the world. Partnering with Estonia in trilateral development assistance could be an effective means of leveraging U.S. development resources.
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